

UNIVERSITY SIN FRONTERAS LIBERATION SUMMER SEMESTER 2012 ATLANTA Project South

Class 5: Rose Brewer
8.8.2012



Rose Brewer sharing on Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and development of Capitalism

Project South and the University Sin Fronteras, the two grassroots social movements organizations hosting the Liberation Summer Semester 2012, welcomed Rose Brewer who travelled from Minneapolis, Minnesota to be with us in Atlanta, Georgia on August 8, 2012.

This class on Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade & Capitalist development was the 5th of six classes, organized as the course on Colonialism and Liberation for the Liberation Summer Semester of the first ever social movements' University Sin Fronteras, a University without walls and beyond borders.

Rose started class number 5 by reminding us on whose shoulders we stand today in the anti-colonial struggle; "Anyone who studies how the slave trade interacted with the ongoing growth of capitalism is indebted to W.E.B. DuBois (Black Reconstruction) and Walter Rodney (How Europe Underdeveloped Africa), both of whom based their work in dialectical materialism. More recent scholars inspired by them have added women, gender roles, and other topics to the history. DuBois and Rodney were punished for their commitment to integrating scholarly work and political activism. Late in his life, DuBois had to leave the

United States, but he was welcomed by Nkrumah and the people of Ghana. Rodney, a Guyanese, was assassinated in 1980”.



Capitalism and colonization were rooted in the enslavement of (Indigenous) Africans and their descendants. A desire for great profits led to the traffic in and exploitation of those slaves.

The kidnapping by brute force of young people, men and women, decimated whole families, clans, tribes, villages, and whole nations of people indigenous to what is now called Africa. The attack on people from Africa lasted 400 years within the slave period but it persists today even as 40 miners are brutally massacred by South African police today. Rose described how the trading of enslaved people from the continent of Africa took practice.

*“The slave trade removed and killed so many young, strong Africans that it became the cause of an African holocaust or **“Maafa,”** ironically solidified in part by cravings for sugar. Slave traders packed as much ‘human cargo’ as they could without causing ‘too many’ deaths. They chained the people so that they were lying close to each other. Sailors repeatedly raped the women”.*

The triangle of death, was the trade between the continent of Africa to pick up the human cargo, and sell the Black people into slavery in the Caribbean and what is the US South now, trading for sugar to transport to the refineries in the colonies (to be US) and make rum to take to Africa for more people to enslave. The whole system of colonial occupation in the Caribbean was based on the PLANTATION system of production that totally depended on FORCED LABOR. These slave trade was the bedrock from which CAPITALISM first got started and the original accumulation of CAPITAL (surplus profits).



Rose Brewer, Adjunct Faculty, sharing the knowledge at the Liberation Summer Semester organized by Project South & University Sin Fronteras

“Once there were enough enslaved Africans involved in the brutal process of growing and producing sugar in the Caribbean, a triangular trade developed. European merchants exchanged human beings seized in Africa for West Indies sugar (often made into rum), which they then exchanged for products in England, which were, in turn, traded for more captive Africans. The profits from all of these sales allowed English and other European capitalists to accumulate massive wealth, which they then invested in more colonies and industrialization in England. For many decades, the Royal African Company had a monopoly over the English slave trade”.

The colonial slave system was based on brute force for brute labor. The terror and violence associated with the colonial system (Empires/Imperialism) starts with GENOCIDE of the Indigenous original people, the PRIVATE PROPERTY of the land (and women and slaves), thus PATRIARCHY is one of the columns that holds up the colonialism, the enslavement of people into forced work, surplus cash crops production and the birth of CAPITALISM and finally EXPANSIONISM.

“Along with monetary capital to invest in textile mills, industrial entrepreneurs depended on resources such as cotton, dyes, gum, and many others, all gained by exploiting the labor of enslaved Africans.

. The capitalists who gained from slavery included those who made money not only selling raw materials such as sugar but also from related businesses such as banking, insurance, and shipping and stimulated others such as fishing in France and the importation of ivory from Africa.

By 1670 South Carolina became the first colony to impose legally sanctioned slavery. By the early 1700s, the colonies had restrictive slave codes (sets of laws).

The economic success of the thirteen colonies that became the United

States was based in the buying and selling of slaves by New England merchants and the selling of goods produced by those slaves in the southern colonies, including tobacco, rice, indigo, and cotton. At one point the colony of Georgia had more people with African roots than with European roots. Most of the so-called Founding Fathers were involved with shipping and/or owning slaves to some extent. Thanks to the labor of the slaves of George Washington, his wealth, when adjusted for inflation, was equal to that of Bill Gates today”.

In *The Racial Contract*, Charles W. Mills covers the ways in which white supremacy affected European colonization and the history of the United States. While most enslaved people were unable to liberate themselves, they found many ways to resist, including through revolt. The successful social revolution led by slaves in Haiti inspired slaves and frightened their masters all over the Americas.

. Emancipation of the slaves in the United States was a liberatory process during which they increased their resistance and left as soon as they knew the U. S. military was relatively close, turning the Civil War into a war of liberation. W. E. B. DuBois wrote about their waging a general strike by "voting with their feet." Thousands joined the U. S. Army. The freed people's primary demand was to own their own land. General William Sherman's Field Order #15 granted land to many along the South Carolina and Georgia coast in January 1864, but when Lincoln was assassinated in April, President Andrew Johnson restored the land to its previous white owners.

The slave trade stole from Africa many skilled workers, including miners and experts on growing rice and tobacco. By taking so many people and resources from Africa, the European and American enslavers limited the ability of Africans to generate capital, weakening and fragmenting the continent. Although the acquisition of wealth requires much labor by some people, turning Africans into slaves reduced the recognition of the value of a person and of human labor. The language of the enslavers seemed to turn a person into a thing, but the many forms of resistance, rebellion, and self-liberation by slaves showed how wrong they were. The logic of capitalism is the logic of slavery. Without slavery, capitalism may not have developed at the same time and with the same features as it did. We cannot understand the history of capitalism without recognizing its slavery foundation. Slavery's connection to the rise of capitalism was similar to serfdom's connection to the rise of feudalism.

English has long been the international language of capitalism. The connections between white supremacy and access to property have created conflicts for people of color seeking economic advancement. We need a system without white supremacy. White

supremacy, with its emphasis on a social hierarchy, has pitted black women and black men against each other. Patriarchy has been closely connected to white supremacy. Certain practices, such as dislocating people from their homeland, made it easier for oppression to be self-sustaining. Since slaves born the Americas had no home to return to, it was harder for them to escape or challenge the system, even after they had liberated themselves. For centuries colonizers, enslavers, and white supremacists have engaged not only in the mass killing of human beings (genocide) but also in the mass killing of knowledge, epistemicide (defined as a war on knowledge and a destruction of existing knowledge).

Strategies of Liberation after Emancipation (Proclamation):

- Calling for the creation of an African American nation outside the border of the United States by Georgian Henry McNeal Turner and others
- Demanding land to allow independence from white employers
- Demanding self-determination, as when freedwomen refused to work in white homes
- Becoming involved in armed struggle during the Civil War and sometimes in self-defense against attacks of white supremacists during and after Reconstruction

Reports from Small Group Discussions of Strategies of Liberation:

- The problem of African Americans who were not born in Africa being without a home country to go back to has some similarities with the experiences of second generation members of immigrant families, especially those who do not speak their parents' native language.
- Very few ex-slaves were interested in moving to Liberia or anywhere else in Africa. Ex-slaves with a narrow range of experiences needed to develop new skills and knowledge to move beyond agricultural work.
- Access to owning land allowed some autonomy, but because of the workings of white supremacist capitalism, it was never easy for black southerners to keep their land.
- Some freed people in the U. S. military during the Civil War used a dialect of English that only they understood (Pidgin English) to organize themselves without alerting the European Americans.
- True self-determination requires access to power; liberation therefore requires a transfer of power that includes the ability to sustain it economically and politically.
- Liberation struggles require strong solidarity between people.
- Self-determination involves, among other things, having an identity
- beyond that imposed by those who vilified the oppressed people.
- Many factors supported colonization, capitalism, and white supremacy, so it will take many factors to overturn them.